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EIGHT FALSE AND MALICIOUS ANTI-ISRAEL CATCHPHRASES AND BUZZWORDS

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Over the years, states, leaders, international organizations, and the international and Israeli media have developed a tendency to endlessly repeat certain internationally recognizable catchphrases and buzzwords with the aim of dictating and influencing a distinct, partisan political narrative against Israel.

This tendency is becoming a permanent phenomenon and increasingly obstructs any genuine attempt to achieve reconciliation between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples.

The use of such phrases and terms in all and any discussion and reporting of events and developments in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is legally inaccurate and blatantly misleading.

While such instances may stem from ignorance as to the genuine meaning of such phrases and

The following are 10 examples of such false, misleading and malicious catchphrases and buzzwords.

1. “State of Palestine”

In fact and in law, no “State of Palestine” exists among the world’s sovereign state entities. No such state has ever existed.

While the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has, since 1974, held observer status in the United Nations as a recognized national liberation movement, its attempts to gain recognition as a full-fledged, voting member state of the United Nations have never succeeded.

The United Nations does not have the legal capacity to establish states, but only to admit states to membership upon the recommendation of the Security Council. The Palestinian leadership has never been able to demonstrate to the UNSC that a Palestinian entity fulfills the universally recognized criteria for statehood.

In attempting to bypass this hurdle, the Palestinian leadership has gradually extended and upgraded its observer status, and even changed the denomination of its observer delegation to “Palestine.” This was achieved through initiating a series of political resolutions in the U.N. General Assembly, which were adopted by an automatic majority. However, such resolutions are not binding and not authoritative.

This Palestinian political exercise in the UNGA culminated in 2012 in another nonbinding and nonauthoritative resolution, adopted by the same automatic political majority, to upgrade the status from an “observer entity” at the United Nations to a “non-member observer state.”

Since 2012, the Palestinian leadership has utilized this change in nomenclature, which has no legal authority, to manipulate the international community into believing that they have achieved statehood and to represent themselves as the “State of Palestine.”

Regrettably, an international community only too willing to pamper the Palestinians has allowed itself to indulge them politically and to go along with such fiction.

But this fiction has not altered the fact that the Palestinian status in the United Nations remains

2. “Palestinian National Authority”

As part of the peace-process agreements and understandings between Israel and the PLO reached between 1991 and 2000, including the 1993-95 Oslo Accords, countersigned and witnessed by the leaders of the international community and endorsed by the United Nations, a “Palestinian Authority” was established to function as an autonomous agency and administer those parts of the disputed territories that were transferred to it by Israel.

The official title of this Palestinian agency as agreed in the Oslo Accords is the “Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority, the elected Council (the “Council”),” but it has become commonly known by its abbreviated form: “Palestinian Authority.”

The title “Palestinian National Authority” was never agreed to or established by the Oslo Accords and its usage is a distinct aberration from the Accords.

In the Oslo Accords, the parties agreed that the P.A., as an administering authority, would not have powers in the sphere of foreign relations, including establishing embassies and consulates and exercising diplomatic functions. Similarly, they agreed not to act in order to prejudice the outcome of negotiations on the permanent status.

Therefore, any use by the Palestinian leadership of alternative titles such as “The State of Palestine” or “Palestinian National Authority” constitutes a clear and deliberate violation of Palestinian commitments pursuant to the signed agreements with Israel, as well as an attempt to prejudice the outcome of negotiations on the permanent status of the territories.

3. The “Illegal Occupation”

In the course of more than 50 years of malicious repetition and deliberately misleading marketing, the expression “the occupation” has become universally synonymous solely with Israel’s presence in Judea and Samaria.

According to the international law and practice of armed conflict, a situation of occupation is illegal. It is an accepted legal situation, a legal term of art referring to a provisional status of belligerency in which one sovereign power occupies, during an armed conflict, the territory

“Occupation” does not reflect the case with respect to Israel, whose status in Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip is unique (*sui generis*) since these areas had never been considered sovereign Jordanian or Egyptian territory. The territories legitimately came under the authority of Israel while it defended itself in a war imposed on it by its neighbors in 1967. The areas were not taken or acquired from states that held prior legitimate sovereign status or powers over the territories, and, as such, do not fall under the accepted definition of occupation.

On the contrary, Jordan’s presence in and 1950 annexation of what it called the “West Bank” never received international recognition. Similarly, Egypt never claimed or represented that its military administration of the Gaza Strip prior to 1967 was of sovereign territory.

Thus, the implication and assumption of Israeli illegality are utterly flawed.

Regrettably, the term “occupation” has been artificially tailored to achieve a negative political connotation with respect to Israel through repetitive international political manipulation. It has been cynically used in the international community to defame and condemn Israel and to delegitimize its legal and historical claims regarding the territories.

With the willing and automatic support of a politically biased international community, the Palestinian leadership has even weaponized the term “occupation” as a means to question Israel’s legitimacy. It has transformed the international legal term “occupation” into a catchphrase “illegal occupation,” which governments, international organizations, diplomats, media and human rights activists have blindly adopted in an attempt to recast Israel as an outlaw state.

The result of such manipulation is that the term “the occupation” is generally misused to imply that Israel took control of and administers the areas illegally. Such misuse ignores legitimate legal and historical claims espoused by Israel and acknowledged by the international community concerning the permanent status of the areas.

The expression is used derogatively only concerning Israel, as if no other situation exists in the world where a state exercises authority in disputed territory. In its apparent fixation on Israel, the international community ignores such cases.

Since the areas of Judea and Samaria in question have never fallen under the accepted definition

endorsed Israeli-Palestinian Oslo Accords (1993-95), to peacefully negotiate and resolve such claims. Pending a negotiated resolution of these areas' permanent status, the parties have agreed to divide the powers and responsibilities involved in their governance.

Therefore, the term "the occupation," selectively and derogatively used against Israel, is flawed and has no legal basis. It runs contrary to the agreed Israeli-Palestinian negotiation process to resolve the issue of the permanent status of the territories and seeks to undermine legitimate claims regarding the territories.

4. "Occupied Palestinian Territory" (OPT)

The phrase "Occupied Palestinian Territory" (OPT) is incorrect both factually and legally. The territories are neither occupied nor Palestinian.

While between 1967 and 1974 U.N. documentation used the term "Occupied Arab Territories," this was artificially altered in U.N. resolutions and documents through politically motivated nonbinding U.N. General Assembly resolutions and constant political repetition, and the term "occupied Palestinian territories" has gained prominence in international parlance since 1974.

There has never been any binding or authoritative international legal instrument, agreement, mandate, declaration, or resolution that determines that portions of Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip are Palestinian. These territories have never been legally or formally designated "Palestinian" territory. They were never part of any Palestinian sovereign entity, which has never existed, and were never taken from any Palestinian entity.

Nevertheless, the erroneous term "OPT" has become *lingua franca* within the international community.

On the contrary, pursuant to the 1993-95 Oslo Accords, the PLO and Israel have committed themselves to negotiating the territories' permanent status. If they themselves are committed to negotiating their permanent status, there can be neither logic nor justification in assuming that the territories are Palestinian. Hence the term "occupied Palestinian territory," which appears in ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) and UN documentation and in declarations and statements by world leaders and international resolutions and even in the Advisory Opinion of the ICJ.

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Accordingly, any use or acceptance of the terms “Palestinian territories” or “occupied Palestinian territories” in effect prejudices the outcome of those agreed-upon negotiations and contravenes and undermines the agreed commitments in the Oslo Accords.

Clearly, the repeated use of blatantly partisan and political terminology cannot create legitimacy. It thrives through pressure from regional groups carrying a distinct political agenda.

5. “Settler Colonialism”

The use of this curious terminology by extreme left-wing and ostensibly progressive elements is nothing more than a shallow and dishonest attempt at manipulation.

It is done by using outmoded, anarchistic and quasi-intellectual templates taken from age-old colonial situations in an effort to transpose them onto the case of Israel. Such templates bear no relation whatsoever to the situation in the Middle East.

Accusing Israel of colonization is an attempt to fraudulently and artificially represent Israel in the same light as the European powers that colonized Africa and the Americas in centuries gone by. Such representation is absurd and an insult to intelligence.

This false and malicious accusation totally ignores the circumstances of the defensive war that brought about Israel’s acquisition of control of the territories in 1967.

It ignores and undermines those central U.N. resolutions and signed agreements calling for a negotiated settlement of the Middle East dispute.

It ignores that both the Israelis and the Palestinians have agreed to divide governance of the territories pending the outcome of the negotiations on the permanent status.

It also ignores the indigenous rights of the Jewish people in the area, as well as the internationally acknowledged historical and legal claims of the Jewish people regarding the area, as recognized in such instruments as the 1917 Balfour Declaration, the 1920 San Remo Resolution, the 1922 League of Nations Mandate instrument, and reaffirmed in Article 80 of the U.N. Charter.

any form of colonialism. The use of non-privately-owned public land for settlement or agriculture is entirely consistent with accepted international norms as long as the status of the land is not changed pending its final negotiated outcome.

Pursuant to the Oslo Accords, settlements are an agreed issue of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians to determine the permanent status of the territories, together with other issues such as borders, refugees, security, economic interests and Jerusalem.

6. “Settler Violence”

This expression has taken on a life of its own as part of the accepted international phraseology seeking to vilify Israel. It attempts to establish a new and unique phenomenon of specially tailored violence that exists nowhere else, as if Israeli residents of settlements have developed their own unique technique of violence.

Violence by anyone, including the residents of Israel’s settlements, is illegal and is to be condemned, prevented, convicted and punished. However, to single out such acts by a small number of residents of Israel’s settlements, and to turn this into a cynical, clichéd and generalized expression intended to tarnish an entire group displays a distinct political bias in any other circumstance, would be considered the subject of censure.

7. The “1967 Borders”

The widely repeated, legally flawed and false call for Israel to “return to the 1967 borders” has become a staple component of the Palestinian narrative. This is even though no such borders existed, and there exists no agreement between Israel and the Palestinians calling for or agreeing to “1967 borders.”

The lines from which Israeli forces entered the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967 were the 1949 Armistice Demarcation lines, which, as stated in the armistice agreements, were not to be considered final political borders.

Following the 1967 war, U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 (1967) called for the negotiation of “secure and recognized boundaries,” thereby formally affirming the international consensus.

In the 1993-95 Oslo Accords, the PLO, in the name of the Palestinian people, and Israel committed to negotiating “the border issue” in the permanent status negotiations.

Bilateral borders cannot be imposed by false and misleading clichés generated to establish false political “facts.” They cannot be imposed by the wishful thinking of partisan elements in the international community. It takes two parties to negotiate a border between them. Any serious negotiation on the border issue must consider the genuine and substantive security, historical and demographic factors necessary to determine any freely negotiated bilateral border.

8. “Apartheid State”

This false, clichéd claim is increasingly repeated by the Palestinian leadership and by propagandists seeking to delegitimize and undermine Israel and represent it as an illegal and criminal entity.

The expression was initially advocated by Yasser Arafat and adopted by NGO groups at the discredited 2001 U.N. Conference on Racism at Durban. It attempts to deliberately misrepresent Israel’s own constitutional and legal system and its administration of the territories in accordance with the norms and principles of international humanitarian law. It further misrepresents and undermines the mutual Israeli and Palestinian commitments in the Oslo Accords, pending negotiated settlement of the permanent status of the territories.

As such, it attempts to establish a false and misleading equivalence with the former South African apartheid regime.

The adoption of this malicious claim indicates a lack of understanding and even utter ignorance of the racist nature and components of the accepted international definitions of the phenomenon of apartheid. It is no less indicative of an even further and more profound lack of understanding of the character of the state of Israel as an open, pluralistic and democratic society.

The complete lack of any equivalence between Israel and its administration of the territories and the former apartheid regime in South Africa is so blatant that one can only assume that those employing such an equivalence are deliberately and maliciously manipulating and misleading international opinion. In so doing, proponents of this claim seek to bring into question the

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international sanctions regime against Israel modeled on the actions against the former apartheid regime in South Africa.

The comparison of Israel to that regime under white supremacist rule has been utterly rejected by those with an intimate understanding of the former apartheid regime, especially experts from South Africa. Israel is known and accepted as a multiracial and multicolored society, and its population constitutionally enjoys complete equality and freedom of expression. It actively participates in the political process, elects its Knesset members and is represented in Israel's government, parliament (Knesset) and Supreme Court. Each religious community in Israel has its own religious court system, applying Sharia, Canon and Jewish law, respectively.

Israeli law regards Judaism, Islam and Christianity as official religions and constitutionally ensures complete freedom and equality for all. This is unlike those Arab and other states where one religion is declared the state religion or Western countries where Christianity is considered the predominant religion. It is much unlike those Muslim countries such as Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, where certain areas, towns and roads are restricted to “Muslims only” and where women are treated as second-class citizens and LGBT individuals as criminals.

Inciting or practicing racism in Israel is a criminal offense, as is any discrimination based on religion, sex, or gender. Israeli schools, universities, and hospitals make no distinction between Jews and Arabs.

Conclusion

It is high time that the international community, leaders, parliamentarians, media representatives and international and regional organizations simply cease to allow themselves to be blindly manipulated and influenced by false clichés and buzzwords. Any serious and sincere consideration of the needs to resolve the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians cannot be based on such catchphrases, which are generated and employed to maliciously dictate a false narrative.

The above list will hopefully serve as an eye-opener for those who unthinkingly permit themselves to be manipulated.



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